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REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 6-11, as amended, remain herein. Independent claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the moisture content of the micro balloons is equal to or less than 0.1% by mass, and to include the limitations from claim 5 in claim 1. Claim 5 has been canceled.

1. Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's comments during the telephone interview with applicants' representative on November 26, 2006 wherein the Examiner suggested rewriting claim 1 to include the terminology of claim 5 to avoid any alleged new matter rejection. Applicants also thank the Examiner for the telephone interview with applicants' representative on January 5, 2007, during which the Examiner stated that if the words "less than or equal to 0.1% by mass" and "wherein a content of the Si source and the Al source included in the inorganic micro balloons is greater than 90% by mass or more," were used in amended claim 1, the objection stated in the Advisory Action would be overcome.

2. Applicants further thank the Examiner for indicating that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(a), or in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Hitachi Metals JP 2002-326881 (hereinafter JP '881) are overcome by the presently amended claims.

This application claims the benefit not only of the PCT international application, but also claims the benefit of the Japanese priority application filed March 29, 2002, which is several months earlier than publication date of the cited Japanese Patent Application Publication 2002-326881. Submitted in the Amendment of November 29, 2006, as attachment A, was a sworn English translation of applicants' Japanese Priority Application No. 2002-094113, which supports applicants' claims. Thus, applicants' Japanese Priority Application antedates JP '811 as

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a *de jure* prior art reference under U.S. law, thus mooted the rejection under §102(b) based upon JP '881.

3. As discussed in the Amendment filed on November 29, 2006, claims 1-8, 10 and 11 had been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), or in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), over Inoue U.S. Patents 4, 871,693 and 4,698,317. Claim 5 has been canceled, and its limitation added to claim 1. Claims 2-4, 6-8, 10 and 11 depend from claim 1.

Applicants discovered a method of forming a cordierite porous body comprising providing cordierite forming materials comprising an Al source, an Si source, and an Mg source, and firing the materials to form cordierite, wherein the Al source and Si source are at least partially provided by inorganic micro balloons containing Al_2O_3 and SiO_2 , wherein a moisture content of the inorganic micro balloons is less than or equal to 0.1% by mass, and wherein a content of the Si source and the Al source included in the inorganic micro balloons is greater than 90% by mass and therefore an MgO content of less than 10% by mass.

Neither Inoue '693 nor Inoue '317 discloses that an Si source and an Al source comprise more than 90% by mass of micro balloons. Rather, Inoue teaches 10-65% MgO, and therefore, a total Si and Al content of 90% or less.

Thus, there is no disclosure in Inoue '693 or Inoue '317 that would have suggested applicants' claimed invention to one of ordinary skill in the art. Further, there is no disclosure or teaching in either Inoue '693 or Inoue '317 that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions of those references effectively to anticipate or render obvious applicants' claimed invention. Accordingly, claims 1-4, 6-8, 10 and 11 are patentable over Inoue '693

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and/or Inoue '317, and applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this ground of rejection, and allowance of all of those claims.

This application is now fully in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully requested. The PTO is hereby authorized to charge/credit any fee deficiencies or overpayments to Deposit Account No. 19-4293 (Order No. 28953.7272). If further amendments would place this application in even better condition for issue, the Examiner is invited to call applicants' undersigned attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Roger W. Parkhurst", is written over a horizontal line.

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